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Note verbale dated 10 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, further to his note verbale dated 30 March 2006 announcing the decision of the Government of Greece to present its candidature to the United Nations Human Rights Council, has the honour to communicate herewith an aide-memoire containing Greece's voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 10 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Aide-memoire on the candidature of Greece to the Human Rights Council

Greece has always been a staunch supporter of the United Nations as guardian of the international legal order, and of the promotion and protection of human rights.

Greece has given priority to United Nations action in the field of human rights and has lent its active support for all components of the United Nations human rights machinery and is ready to play an active role in the United Nations system, particularly in the field of promotion and protection of human rights, by submitting its candidature to the Human Rights Council.

Greece supported from the outset the creation of an effective and efficient Human Rights Council, equipped with enhanced status, mandate, structures and membership necessary to give human rights the central role foreseen by the Charter and the reform Summit and to contribute to the credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations human rights system. The Greek Government welcomes the establishment of the new Human Rights Council responsible for contributing effectively to the prevention of human rights violations, responding promptly to human rights emergencies and providing guidance and assistance to all countries to achieve the highest standards of human rights protection.

Greece is party to almost all major international instruments in the field of human rights and humanitarian law, such as:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1997) and its first and second Optional Protocols (1997)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1985)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1970)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1983) and its Optional Protocol (2002)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1988)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1993) and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2003)
- Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2001)
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1954)
- Four Geneva Conventions (1955), as well as the two Additional Protocols (1988, 1992, respectively)

- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2002)
- Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1981) and its Second Protocol (2005)

Greece has consistently observed its reporting obligations.

It has supported the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has actively participated in the work of the United Nations human rights bodies. Greece has also supported the valuable work of the Council of Europe, as well as the role of the European Court of Human Rights, in defending and promoting human rights in Europe. Greece also actively works on the human dimension of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The duty to respect, promote and protect human rights is enshrined in the Greek Constitution.

In 2001, a series of constitutional amendments were adopted in order to better harmonize the domestic legal order with Greece's international obligations in the field of human rights. A number of legislative and administrative measures have been adopted with a view to implement these amendments.

Such measures include:

- The launching of a comprehensive National Action Plan to combat trafficking in human beings in cooperation with international organizations, other Governments and non-governmental organizations. In the field of human trafficking the Greek Government has recently signed a relevant convention within the Council of Europe and a bilateral agreement with Albania.
- The active role of Greece in the Human Security Network, of which it is a founding member.
- Furthermore, a number of important laws have been recently adopted to comply with relevant recommendations by United Nations human rights treaty bodies pertaining, inter alia, to the rights of the child, gender equality, prohibition of discrimination, especially on racial and ethnic grounds, protection of vulnerable groups such as migrants and AIDS patients and the integration of non-citizens into Greek society.
- The establishment of the Office of Greek Ombudsman, with a broad mandate related to human rights, including an assistant Ombudsman on the rights of the child.
- Equally important was the creation in 2000 of a National Commission on Human Rights to promote and monitor protection of human rights nationwide.
- In the same spirit, and due to a systematic effort in human rights education at all levels, in conformity with resolutions and recommendations of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the judicial authorities, especially the highest Courts, often directly invoke and apply United Nations and other human rights instruments.

Greece will continue to strive for the strengthening of the universal respect for and promotion and protection of human rights. At the national level Greece commits itself to comply with its international human rights obligations, including those set out in the above-mentioned instruments.

Greece undertakes to ratify in the near future:

- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (signed September 2000).
- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (signed December 2000).
- The Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (signed 2000).
- The third additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the adoption of an additional distinctive emblem (signed December 2005).
- The Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court (signed September 2003).

Greece commits itself:

- To consider ratifying other relevant international instruments.
- To further cooperation among the public and private sector as well as civil society in the field of human rights.

In the United Nations, Greece, reiterating its long-standing commitments, pledges to:

- Fully cooperate with the Human Rights Council as set forth in General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006.
- Ensure adequate and effective responses to human rights crises when they occur, guided by universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, while promoting international dialogue and cooperation.
- Fully cooperate with the competent treaty bodies, submit national reports in a timely manner and take seriously into account the relevant concluding observations and recommendations, in its constant effort to further the promotion and protection of all human rights.
- Contribute in an open and constructive way to the discussions on the reform of the human rights treaty body system and to actively pursue the enhancement of the effectiveness and the rationalization of the treaty monitoring mechanisms.
- Maintain its standing invitation to the special procedures, which Greece considers to be one of the major achievements of the Commission on Human Rights, and ensure the unobstructed discharge of their duties, including the readiness to receive their visits whenever and wherever.
- Demonstrate its readiness to cooperate in the universal periodic review mechanism which will submit all States to scrutiny.
- Emphasize the Council's task to promote effective coordination and mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system.
- Continue supporting the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights by considering raising its voluntary contribution ever further

and being active in other relevant United Nations funds, programmes and bodies.

- Continue to promote dialogue and cooperation in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding as the primary means for protecting and strengthening human rights worldwide.

- Continue to give special emphasis to the strengthening of gender equality, the rights of women and the rights of the child.

- Continue to work for the universality and indivisibility of all human rights, civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural, including the right to development. Greece will give particular attention to the relation between human rights, poverty, sustainable development and environmental protection, equal opportunities access to essential natural resources (i.e., water), to food, to adequate shelter and sanitation services, to education, as instituted by the respective United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

- Continue to contribute actively to the early successful conclusion of the negotiations on an "International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities".